

Health and welfare information about your cat from Vetlexicon Felis.



Laparoscopic ovariectomy (keyhole spay)

Laparoscopic ovariectomy also known as a ‘keyhole’ spay is a minimally invasive surgery to remove the ovaries through a small incision in the abdomen. This avoids the large wound required to remove the ovaries and womb in a conventional neutering. Because the surgery does not require a large incision the patient has less discomfort/pain on recovery and they usually return more rapidly to usual exercise compared with open surgery.

Why should I get my cat spayed?

The main reason to spay a cat is to prevent unplanned litters and overpopulation. Other benefits include; prevention of uterine infections (which can be life threatening), avoidance of seasons (‘heat’) which can be messy and inconvenient for some owners, to reduce the risk of mammary cancer. Some diseases, such as diabetes are easier to control in spayed animals so your veterinarian may advise spaying if your pet has certain medical problems.

Although your pet’s behavior will not change after the procedure some abnormal behaviors which have been caused by hormones, such as aggression, ‘humping’ (mounting inanimate

objects) and an increased sense of territory can improve. You need to have a detailed discussion with your veterinarian if you are considering spaying to help manage behavioral problems. If these behaviors have been learned, then spaying alone will not resolve the issue and you will need to consult a behavioral specialist.

What changes might I see in my cat after spaying?

The changes seen after neutering will be the same however the procedure was carried out.

When pets have been spayed they may gain weight. To prevent this you need to ensure your pet gets as much exercise as they did before the procedure you may need to reduce the amount of food given by 10-15% a day.

Incontinence is seen more frequently in neutered females but the overall risk is low. Some owners report changes to the coat quality after spaying. These reports are anecdotal and no scientific evidence has been published to support this observation.

When should I get my pet spayed?

Cats come into season about every three weeks and can be spayed at any time after they have stopped their excessive vocalization/meowing. Depending on the reason for spaying, eg a male in the house or having an outdoor cat, early spaying may be necessary to prevent unplanned litters.

Why should I choose a keyhole surgery over a routine spay?

Laparoscopic ovariectomy has been performed routinely in pets for around 30 years. Although initially it was only performed in specialist clinics, it is more often becoming available in general veterinary practices. The surgery is faster than conventional neutering and because the surgical incisions are smaller there is less tissue damage which reduces post-operative pain and your pet is likely to recover more quickly. The smaller wounds also mean

your pet will be less likely to want to lick the wound and pull at stitches. Most pets are back to relatively normal activity the day after surgery.

How do I prepare my pet before surgery?

Your pet will need to be starved from tea time on the day before surgery but they should have access to water until the morning of surgery unless otherwise instructed by your veterinarian. Your pet will be admitted on the morning of the procedure. A health check will be performed at the time and the veterinarian may ask a few questions about your pet's health. Your pet will then be admitted for the day with the aim to send them home in the afternoon.

What happens during the procedure?

Fur will be clipped where the intravenous catheter(s) needs to be placed in your pet's leg(s) and at the surgical site under the abdomen.

For the procedure two or three small incisions (about 1 cm in length) are made in the midline on the abdomen. A small camera is inserted through one of the holes so the veterinarian can see what is happening inside the abdomen. Surgical instruments are inserted through another hole and the ovaries will be identified and removed. If your veterinarian is concerned about the appearance of the uterus then this will be removed as well, as a precaution and sent for analysis. The incisions are all closed on the inside with dissolving sutures which means these do not need to be removed later.

Your pet will recover in one of the wards until your veterinarian feels they are well enough to go home.

What can go wrong during surgery?

One of the most severe potential complications during the surgery is the risk of bleeding.

There is a big blood vessel that goes to the ovaries which must be tied off during surgery before the ovary can be removed. If bleeding occurs it can usually be controlled successfully but on rare occasions a larger abdominal incision needs to be made so that the veterinarian can get better access to find and tie off the bleeding vessel.

How do I look after my pet after surgery?

For the rest of the day after surgery your pet should be kept inside. Make sure they have a warm and comfortable bed to sleep on and let them rest as much as they want. Offer them a small amount of food that evening if they are hungry. From the day after surgery your pet can go back to their normal exercise and feeding regimen. Swimming should be avoided for two weeks after surgery until the wounds have healed completely.

The wounds may have been covered with a dressing. These can be removed 24-48 hours after surgery unless they have fallen off before. Check the wounds twice a day for signs of redness, discharge, swelling or wound breakdown. If you notice any change to the wound or it starts to smell then contact your veterinary practice immediately for further advice. Sometimes fluid builds up underneath the wounds and this may start to leak out so contact your veterinarian if you see any swelling around the wounds. Make sure you give any medication prescribed by your veterinarian.

Keyhole surgery is now a realistic option for many pets so make sure you discuss all options with your veterinarian before making a decision.